

Developing Successful Multi-level Partnerships in Support of Ethnically and Linguistically Diverse Families

Lorena Garza Gonzalez: Good afternoon. Lyn and I are very excited to be here with you today and would like to share a little bit about who we are and what we've done out in the field to give it some context as we proceed in our conversations around parent engagement, partnership, and relationships and the benefit that it has for our children. I work for a firm called Urban Strategies, and at Urban Strategies, we're dedicated to build capacity in communities looking at the strengths, at the opportunities that our communities have, and helping them grow even greater to serve larger scales of community.

In our picture here, you can see both of us are engaged in community, and on the right side of the screen, I suppose, it is with a group of parents who had really been suffering in their community around lack of water, lack of infrastructure, access to educational resources. What was magnificent is that they recognized the strengths that they had, the passion and commitment they had. And our job was to come in and try to accelerate and release some of that passion and enthusiasm. As a result, we have seen communities really take leadership to help bring all of those resources, specifically in this community. As a result, their Head Start communities, their schools have now partnered. They have an access through infrastructure on roads on how to get back and forth. They've built some great partnerships with the educational and business communities and are thriving. And when parents are thriving, their children are thriving.

And so we're very happy, and privileged, honestly, to be engaged in so many wonderful communities and understanding that our job is not to empower them, but our job is to release their power. They have the power. They have the commitments and strengths. And our job is just to help kind of release that for them and help them recognize that, in fact, they are leaders, and in building that, they build their families and communities, and most importantly, children.

Lyn Morland: I love that approach. Thank you, Lorena. And I'm Lyn Morland, and my background is in both social work and anthropology, directing community-based multicultural organizations and also providing national technical assistance. And for the past four years, I've had the distinct honor and privilege of working with the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness for Head Start. And I started out as the refugee resettlement technical assistance partner with Head Start. So I can now speak from both the Head Start, as well as the community-partner perspective. And so that's where I will be speaking from today. And what I'll be doing is really highlighting two partnership projects that we developed, and one was together, starting with the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, and we worked through two pilot sites, one in Syracuse and one in Phoenix. And I'm hoping that maybe some of our partners are listening today.

So, these refugee and immigrant emerging communities at Head Start have begun to get more and more attention. And so our partnership projects were, as you were talking about, meeting with people, hearing their perspectives, releasing their power and leadership, really, in problem-solving, and coming up with solutions to how to better serve these emerging communities. After we worked with the refugee communities and pilot sites, we started working with the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start office, the collaboration office, and the indigenous from Mexico, as well as from Guatemala, were also very marginalized and vulnerable communities. And so we have also worked together with pilot sites in California and in Florida and have worked through a similar process of listening and building

relationships and then developing materials together to help these two service systems -- the indigenous organizations, as well as Migrant and Seasonal Head Start to work together.

So, in our photo here, I'm with my NCCLR team, and we are at the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project in Oxnard, California. And they were our first partner in doing this. And most of the women in the photo are actually Mixtec health promoters. And they conduct outreach to the community and engage parents, provide home visits, health education, and link them to other services. And MICOP, who's the organization, provides a broad range of services, including baby-wellness classes. And there were a number of ways that MICOP and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start have been working together. So, this has been our focus in building these partnerships and trying to institutionalize this work, helping to do that. And again, as you were saying, Lorena, really releasing that leadership and that capacity.

Lorena: So, as we get started, much of our experience has been working in community. So, for many years, as we started our work at Urban Strategies with our communities, we found a lot of place where there was such opportunity. Some of our work in Head Start with the Healthy Marriage and Relationship was just magnificent to see when families had the tools and the skills. You know, Lyn, I remember working with a Head Start in Puerto Rico, actually -- so shout out to my friends in Puerto Rico -- I remember meeting a family who was about to begin in some of the classes at Head Start that were addressing relationships and marriage, and I recall that the couple had said to us that their child was now going to be in some therapeutic classes, had some behavioral problems, was acting out in his classes, and teachers were also sharing that. And so we were thrilled that at their Head Start center, they had those wraparound and support services. I go back a few months later, and the parents tell me they no longer have their child in the therapeutic classes and in the behavioral classes.

And I was a little disappointed because the Head Start program there had great support services. But the parent then says to us, "Well, we realized it wasn't our child who was having behavioral problems, it was us. We were the ones that were involved in inappropriate discussions and yellings and conflict, and it was the child who was learning to mimic that and exhibited that in his classroom." And so it was really interesting to see when the tools come, when there are these partnerships around and support services to help, the magnificent work that teachers and leaders at Head Start are doing. So, as we get started, I want to talk a little bit about some underlying approaches and values. We know that given the complexities of multiculturalism and its benefits, we are oftentimes not clear in understanding what that role is.

And so it's really important for us to start to think about our approach in serving our community. And so before we address specifically some of the areas of partnerships and relationships, we want to talk about this idea of humility -- cultural humility. And the wording itself oftentimes brings some uncomfortable feelings because it sometimes may make us feel as if we're giving up something, or we don't have control. And, in fact, it's sharing that kind of control. So the idea of cultural humility is the ability to maintain a stance in relationship with our parents, specifically around culture. And Murray and Garcia have done magnificent work around this idea, and in 2013, talked about the specific factors that help guide cultural humility.

So, I want to talk very quickly about some of those. They talk about this idea of lifelong commitment to learning and self-critique. And what does that mean? It's this idea that we are never culturally competent, the idea that, "Oh, I got it. I know it," is completely erroneous because we can never

assume that we know anybody else's culture or that we're competent in someone else's culture. It's the idea that I'm willing to come to the table understanding what maybe some of my biases or lack of understanding are and willing to engage with our parents to understand. I can tell you that, from personal experience -- And I come from the communities that I work with in our Head Start. I come from a poverty community, impoverished community. I am a daughter of immigrant and migrant workers. So I felt I understood my community well enough to make some assumptions.

As a researcher, I should know better, but I felt I came from the community, so I know enough. What's interesting is that once I entered community and heard, I was completely wrong because my assumption was I knew it. I knew what was best for my community. And so I really had to step back and check myself and ask myself, "Have I really come with a clean slate to hear, to remove judgment, and to arrive a place where I'm learning from my parents?" There's another factor that guides humility, and it's this idea of power balance. Oftentimes, we see ourselves well-educated, bringing some academic preparation, scientific knowledge, and we often come to a place where we think that we're here to fix. "I'm here to fix a problem in our parents. I'm here because I know more." The idea of power balance is really bringing that balance between the parents and the services that we're bringing. We want to say that parents bring the power of their history, the power of their experience, and that jointly, we're addressing these ideas to make and create solutions for each other.

Finally, in this factor that leads cultural humility is the idea that we are here to support our parents through collaborative partnerships that include schools and businesses and faith organizations. And we'll talk a little bit more about those. But to understand that individually, we can make great impact and have great impact, but collectively, the impact is as strong or even stronger because we can bring in systemic change and bring in some perspectives that not only we from the institution, but also bringing in other community perspectives.

And so we think of cultural humility as a really nice way to think about how we enter into this relationship with parents. We also want to talk very quickly about some of the practices and some of the dynamics of our diverse population. We often hear of this approach of collective and individualistic styles. And although I think they're both very important, I often believe that both of these are on a spectrum or a continuum. The continuum of practicing this in both areas is very unique, so the collectivism talks about the idea that, "I'm interdependent in my community, or my family."

For example, I recently had a Head Start teacher who shared with me that she had called the parent to visit about her child, and if she could come back to visit a couple hours later. She did. She came back, but she also came back with the husband, the mother-in-law, the other siblings, another aunt that was living in the home, and they all came to hear and try to help problem-solve of what was occurring into this family. The teacher was a little offended and said, "She didn't listen to me. I asked her to come." Understanding that many of our diverse cultures really navigate in this connected, interdependent process helps us understand where they're coming from. You will often hear a parent say, "Well, I'm going to go check with so and so," or, "I'll check with my husband," or, "I'll check with my wife," or, "I'll check." And oftentimes, folks -- they will -- "Why can't you make that decision?" Because we problem-solve in the collective place. We problem-solve as a community. So the community in this case would be our family. The individualistic approach is the idea that, "I'm self-reliant, I am self-motivated, I am independent, versus interdependent." Neither one of these are better, they're just different, and we need to recognize that families fall in the spectrum between these and not, you know, force ourselves

to think one way of them or the other, but to recognize those different approaches by which our families navigate. Let's talk a little bit about partnerships and relationships.

And I think one of the ways that it's helpful to think about this -- In my many, many years of working with Head Start, I can hear, and I still hear, teachers and leaders talking about the idea of bonding with your children. "When you're in the classroom, you must bond." Why do we want to bond with children? And what we've discovered is that there is this bonding, there is a relationship, there is trust, there is credibility, and a child will be more likely to be responsive to you. We ask parents to bond with their children. The same happens in this relationship with the mother-child. So if we think about Head Start and our message of bonding and building relationships, it is exactly what we're thinking. It's not just having the partnership, but also going deeper, where you're finding that there is a trust where one and the other can exchange more freely. We'll talk a little bit more about this partnership and relationship in another model.

And I want to finally talk about this idea of parent engagement from a twofold. I recall -- So, we've been in this field, I will admit, 25 years, and so I've had the opportunity to see so much evolve. But I can remember early on in asking many of our Head Start, and for that matter, schools, "What type of parent engagement do you have?" And often, we would hear, "Oh, the parents are the best. They bring the cakes for the Cake Walk. They bring all the tacos for the taco sale." And that just didn't seem as if we were really tapping into the strengths and the abilities of our parents. We were just touching the surface and asking them to bring things. And so as we go through this discussion, I want us to move away from that superficial place, as we often say, "Beyond the taco and bake sale" -- that it's really deeper than that. And we're tapping into the strengths of our parents. And so why do we want to have partnership? What's the purpose of this partnership? Historically, we have thought of partnerships as very isolated and very formal. When we think of partnerships, we find that they need to be more relationship within this partnership.

And so in building the partnership, we've come to know that when we want the best for children, we really are looking at having the community involved, not just parents. Certainly, they are the primary. But that we're looking at building all of these partners involved in our children's development. And so there are often a variety of partnerships. And I want to touch base on a few of them. So, schools are certainly partners, but again, I come to what oftentimes folks think about these partnerships, and they are, "Oh, we have a memorandum of agreement with the elementary that these children will feed into." It's beyond that. It's an exchange. It's those teachers from that school coming to our Head Start centers, meeting parents there.

It's our Head Start teachers and directors knowing the schools, meeting the children, that it's far more integrated than just a memorandum of agreement. The faith-based community -- So, historically, we have feared partnering with faith community because we weren't quite sure what their mission and vision, and did it match with ours? But what we've come to identify is that the faith-based community really is center in many of the communities of our Head Start, and in fact, have very related and aligned visions for the development of children, the support of children. For example, we've been working with an Early Head Start back in Texas that has a wonderful faith-based partner. One of the parents in their Head Start was diagnosed with cancer, and the church community came up and provided these wraparound services that were focused at the time where Head Start was not available. So it was the weekends. The church community brought food to this parent. The men of the church

built ramps for the mother for her wheelchair. They cared for the children in the evenings when the mother was not well. So we come to learn that the faith community really has a role in supporting our children around in our communities.

Business and community organizations are critical. We have, as well, seen wonderful partnerships that have helped parents have internships and learn skills, specifically around I.T., being present and learning a new skill, and being able to then use some of those skills to help children navigate through technology. And so we ask the question, "How do we know it's working?" And there's some critical elements, as we think about, "How do we know if these partnerships are working?" It's critical to understand that for us at Head Start -- important, important -- is that our parents have a voice. And are they being heard? And is their voice being present in these partnerships? Also, it's critical to ensure that we've identified outcomes in these partnerships? What is it that we're committed to do with this partner? What does that look like? And are we collecting data to measure that? And finally, it's the idea that we're checking in.

So we don't wait till the end of this project, or we wait at some period of time to check in, but that we're checking in periodically with partners and ensuring that we are, in fact, building that which is a true partnership. So let's move into a model here that we've been working very closely with in some of our projects and some of our work, and it's this model of partnership. This idea of partnership is a place where, although every marker is important, the idea is to try to build to where we get to a place where there's a level of formality. And when I say "formality," I mean that we are all clearly on the same page. So in this area of cooperation -- And so I'll use, Lyn, a model -- these examples through what we saw so beautifully at one of our Head Starts with a health fair they were conducting. So, the idea -- This first marker on this continuum is cooperation. So, when we think of cooperation, we think of a newly formed group. It's also a place where we can test -- "Is this a relationship we want to develop? Is this the right relationship?"

So it's this idea that it's very informal, and it would look like Head Start is putting together a health fair. They ask a parent, "Can you pass out fliers? Can you disseminate some fliers to the other parents?" Maybe good, maybe bad, but that's the beginning of this cooperative relationship. When we move into this area of coordination, we start to look at it a little bit, and then we go back. The other thing to really remember is that in this first level, it's really the vision of, for example here, Head Start. Head Start has a vision for this health fair, and the parents are being brought in to some degree there. When we look at coordination, this is a bit more formalized. The relationship is a little stronger. It is still center -- Head Start vision. But now we have a different role. What that would look like is at the health fair, we would have a staff person manning a table along with a parent. And so the parent is present. They're helping out. They're involved. They're engaged. At this place, we're still at a place where it's the vision of the Head Start and parents joining in. When we look at collaboration, this becomes a little different. This now becomes a shared vision.

So the planning and preparation of this health fair becomes one where a parent has a voice, where we might think, "Well, I think for a health fair, we might want to address obesity, we want to address diabetes, and we want to address heart disease." But a parent in the planning, in this collaborative stage, may add their own thoughts. They may want to talk about childhood immunizations. They may want to talk about addressing other issues that are affecting them that we may not be aware.

So in this collaborative stage, it's a shared vision. We're coming together to develop this health fair. Parents are very engaged and very active. When we look at the last phase in this last marker on this plan, the strategic alliance is very sophisticated, but I have seen it, and it is fantastic. So this health fair now becomes community-owned. It's no longer owned by any organization in this case. It would not be owned by Head Start. But they have now developed the leadership skills in these parents and the community that the health fair has its life of its own. They're all working, but now it belongs to them. It belongs to community. And so in this place, we are role-modeling for -- and along the spectrum -- we are role-modeling, we are engaging, we are teaching leadership skills, we're giving a voice to parents, an ownership to parents. And it is a place where they can practice at every level, so by the time they get to a strategic place, they are leading this. They have now become the leaders of these activities.

And so why is this important? What we start to see is that children relate much differently in centers when parents are present, when parents are holding their children accountable, when parents are visible, and they, themselves, see their parents engaged and practicing. So it's a great opportunity to teach parents to teach their children. So, tell us, as we move on, what are some of the communities that you've been working with, and what have been some of the examples of that collaborative effort?

Lyn: Yeah. Thanks, Lorena. So, again, I'm going to drill down a little bit and talk about who are our parent communities. And I want to start by saying that Head Start has always urged programs to be responsive to their changing communities, and this is often through the community assessment process, and to prioritize and serve the children and families who are particularly vulnerable. So, many of these refugee and immigrant families that I'll be talking about will qualify and will be high-priority. And at the same time, I'll talk about access, too, for them. So, many experience language, culture, and literacy barriers, and the actual rate of participation in early childhood programs is much lower for the vulnerable refugee and immigrant communities. So, how have our communities been changing? Young children in immigrant families are the fastest-growing child population in the U.S., and this is 25 percent of our children today.

And again, rapidly growing. Although immigrants vary tremendously by background, almost half are low-income. About half are limited-English-proficient. And more than twice as many immigrant parents than those born in the U.S. lack a high-school diploma. So this can put their children at risk for school readiness and success. I think the other thing to pay attention to is that these refugees and immigrants virtually live in all communities. And I think we tend to think of them in California, maybe Texas and New York. But the top three states with the greatest increases in immigrants in the last 10 years were South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, I think South Dakota is another. And the majority are from Mexico and Central America and parts of Asia. And there are increasing numbers from Mexico and Guatemala who are also indigenous and are starting to settle and create communities here.

So these have been changes over the last couple of decades, really. Refugees, who, by definition, are fleeing persecution, they arrive to the U.S. through a federal humanitarian program. And this is an entirely separate service system for refugees. And we found pretty quickly that there was very little interaction between the refugee resettlement program and Head Start, even though, and I'll talk about, how there's a natural partnership there that will help serve families. Although they're much smaller in numbers, refugees are extremely diverse. This past year, they came from over 70 different countries and spoke collectively over 280 languages. So, if you think about the programs serving refugees, as well indigenous immigrants, it's a real challenge to get the interpreters, translate

materials, if the language is written, and many of the indigenous languages are not. Really communicate and provide outreach that's meaningful to parents so that they can build that trust and that sense of identity with the program.

So, many of the Mixtecos and other indigenous immigrants who we've been working with from Southeastern Mexico are migrant farm workers, often speak little Spanish. You have been working with these communities, and it sounds like you have tremendous -- You are from this community originally, too, and have a tremendous understanding. So, you know how these communities can be marginalized from early childhood education. And these are also the communities who can benefit the most from the education programs. And I'm wondering how many of you all in the audience are serving refugees and immigrants in your programs, and if you can share with us maybe through the chat box if you are serving them, and if so, where are they from?

Lorena: This technology's so exciting.

Moderator: Yeah, it takes a minute for folks to start responding. Vietnam.

Lyn: Okay, great. Originally refugees. Most.

Moderator: Bangladesh, Nepal.

Lyn: Okay. Great. We've had many Bhutanese come in from Nepal as refugees.

Moderator: So far, those are the only two countries -- Mexico. They're starting to come now. Somalia, Ethiopia.

Lyn: Okay.

Moderator: Eritrea. Africa, Rwanda, Morocco, Honduras. Some more people saying Mexico, El Salvador, Thailand. Let's see. The Mixtec in Watsonville, California.

Lyn: Ah, that's great. Great.

Moderator: Africa, Japan, Nigeria.

Lorena: Yeah, very diverse groups.

Lyn: That's very diverse. This is fantastic.

Moderator: Bahamas, China. Iraq and Iran.

Lorena: You know what I find interesting is we, too, have been working with unaccompanied children coming from Central, South America, and I go back to that place where when we meet children, we are drawn from our heart, right? We're drawn to our heart. And oftentimes, we want to serve them in a way that -- We go back to talking about cultural humility. We want to respond to them, and we want to help them. And we have to be careful that because we think they've come from so far, they may be hurt, that we have the answer to serving them. And I have to check myself. I did a couple of weeks ago. As I was visiting these young children, as young as 3 years old, who had traveled from Central, South America, immediately, you want to take care of, but we really want to be able to put ahead and ask children, "What do you want? What do you need?" And so it's nice to see the diverse areas of our children and to be mindful of not wanting to come and save children.

Lyn: I think that's a wonderful point, Lorena. And thanks to you all in the audience for responding. That is really interesting that it is so -- They're still coming in. Wow. Great. So, there's a lot of experience in serving people from different cultures out there. And I think you make a wonderful point, too, because we often focus on the needs of the families and children or the barriers to services and the lack of literacy. And these things are important. But as we all know, the families and the children come with tremendous strengths. And there's actually something called the immigrant paradox, and that is that new immigrants tend to have higher parenting skills, actually. Sometimes more nurturing. And children for new immigrants, again, tend to have a better health profile, often, than subsequent generations. Very high motivation for education, often, though, kids and families can get discouraged over time because of those barriers to services and the language and cultural differences. So, I am going to the next slide, and again, going a little deeper, culturally. And this is a quotation from a Somali mom. And when she was asked, you know, "What does engagement in education mean to you?" and her response was, "In our culture, you send the kids to school, and they're the school's responsibility. But here, the first thing the mother will ask me is, 'What is the teacher complaining for? Isn't that her job? Isn't she the one who's supposed to fix the child? Why is she telling me this?'"

And what I think is so interesting -- I'm going to point out just a few of the complexities and opportunities for misunderstandings that can come up. You know, first of all, this mother is talking about the customs and the values of her culture. And this is where parents respect the teachers, and they do not interfere with their teaching, with their roles. And that's considered very appropriate. So what she's saying here is that she's very confused. The roles that she's always known just aren't working anymore. And she really doesn't understand why this teacher is asking her to come to the school and to be involved. Other complications sometimes are with the language. So she's speaking in English, and those of us who have struggled to learn a new language, we know that we often translate literally in our heads.

And so the way that our language comes across can sometimes be misunderstood or misconstrued. Cultures also have different ways of expressing themselves emotionally, too. And that can get in the way of communication. Some things may sound harsh to our ears, and so we may jump to conclusions that this is a negative style of parenting. And this can happen even if the child is obviously attached to the mother and seems to be thriving. So, this takes me back to the cultural humility, Lorena, that you talked about. And so even if we hear things that don't sound right to us or that trigger certain assumptions on our part, it is so important to step back, to listen, to try to learn more about that culture. "Where is this parent coming from?" And keep in mind that often the parenting skills are quite strong, and they've been developed over, you know, thousands of years. The parents and the families are just in a new context now, and they're having to adapt, but we also need to adapt.

Lorena: Absolutely.

Lyn: And that includes, you know, of course, child-rearing practices and beliefs. What age should we stop breastfeeding, for example. Should children feed themselves? Should they take care of siblings? What does "discipline" mean, and what does that look like? So all of these things need to be discussed and also understood. So I think this slide is mainly a reminder to us that we often focus on the parents coming in to us, and I think that has definitely changed. You talked about how things have transformed over time. And for the most part, that has changed. But just to keep in mind, programs still have a hard time reaching out and engaging the families, and with that participation rate and early childhood

education still being low among refugee and immigrant families, then there is a disconnect happening. So how can we think about that differently and think about this in terms of where the families are coming from? And I'll just hit these highlights and then move on and go into what we've worked on in partnership with the families and communities in more depth.

But obviously, family engagement is a shared responsibility. And this means making the programs accessible and meaningful to the parents. Cradle to career -- So, throughout the child's lifetime. And preschool is so, so, so important, of course, to these children and families. And it helps the parents learn about engagement and the education system in the school. They can get a lot of orientation about our culture and how to work with the schools, as well as access to other services. And so that means across contexts. So, wherever children learn, whether it's the faith-based organizations, which it often is, the health care organizations, the schools. So just framing that larger view and also thinking about the contrasts between how we often think about family engagement and how that Somali mom was thinking about it. Something to talk about -- what works? I'm doing a time check here. So, one of the things that we have focused on here is relationship, and that's so key for Head Start, as we've talked about from the child and parent or family -- through to the family and agency and teachers and even the community level, so on up.

So, one of the things that we did, and this was with the Refugee Resettlement and Head Start collaboration, was we did some research, and we wanted to choose two sites that were doing this collaboration very, very well. So, we went to Syracuse, New York, and to Phoenix, Arizona, and did a number of interviews. And I'll do my shout-out to Nicole Ives, who was our qualitative research on this and did a fabulous job. But she did focus groups with the refugee family. She talked to the Head Start staff. She talked to the refugee resettlement staff, to the leaders in the community, and to the refugee organizations, Refugee Resettlement.

And so what did we learn? And of course it comes back to relationship. And relationship will also underlie all the other things that I talk about under "What Works?" So, finding common goals -- And this goes back to your model. And I think all of these models reflect a very similar process. I have to also mention the parent, family, and community engagement framework from the National Center and Office of Head Start. And that talks about integration within this agency, within the agency, mainly, and how key that is and ways to do that. There's also been some work with Early Head Start and the childcare partnerships and just fabulous tools developed. So if you all aren't already using those, and I hope you are, we encourage you to go to those. And what we're talking about here, I think, builds on these models that talk about such a similar process and similar importance on relationship, too. So among the Refugee Resettlement and Head Start sites, finding common goals was really the first step to building the relationships, and these motivated participants to work together, to learn about each other, to rise above the differing organizational priorities, the different language that organizations use.

You know, the different acronyms, professional jargon that we like to use. So those relationships that were formed through this were really the building blocks that made the partnerships possible. And one question that we heard a lot was, "Who do I call? I have a refugee arriving. I have an immigrant who speaks, you know, a language that I don't recognize. They don't seem to know Spanish. Who do I call?" So, people need to have that information and those relationships so that they know who to talk to and how to coordinate services. So, one quote from a refugee resettlement staff member, and this was

their advice, was to build on relationships that already exist. We knew one Head Start agency because they had reached out to us, but we didn't know any others.

So we said to the one that we knew, "Hey, invite these other programs to the table." So they did, and they came. And so it was the start of a beautiful relationship, as we said. Another key was mutual knowledge. So listening and learning from each other and being able to step back and have that cultural humility. And this leads to the better understanding of refugee families and that service system and also the better understanding of the needs of Early Head Start, Head Start staff, and teachers. And this also helped the agencies fill the gaps and reduce the overlap of services that was going on. So one more quote, for me, too -- "Knowing what's out there, what's available for these families, knowing what they need from us so that we're not working towards different ends. We're all working for the same goal and not overlapping. Making sure the needs are met. Now we understand what each other is doing." And then creative problem solving. Once people knew who to call and were sitting down at the same table and beginning to build trusting relationships, wonderful things began to happen. It's really a powerful process.

Lorena: It's watching something flourish before you that is so magnificent when all the elements are present, when we are really practicing all the strategies to build partnerships based on relationships. As you're speaking through that, I am imagining, and it's just a fantastic thing.

Lyn: It's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing. So, working together, they were able to brainstorm about, "What are the barriers to our working together, to our coordinating?" And, you know, putting good minds together, they came up with the solutions. So I'm going to tell you -- just describe a couple of these. So, for outreach and recruitment to families, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Refugee Resettlement worked with ethnic community-based organizations. And so these are led by the refugee groups. They disseminated information, they created recruitment videos in refugee languages. Then the Head Start and Early Head Start agencies included the Refugee Resettlement in the community-assessment process. And so that was a very new communication and collaboration strategy. Another example is enrollment. So ethnic-community-based organizations, again, engaged families because there was that trust and that existing relationship. Early Head Start/Head Start programs hired refugees as classroom aides, and sometimes I think that is the -- You know, in Syracuse, the Somalis poured in once they had a classroom aide who was Somali. That created that bridge. And she could go back and talk to the community about what she was doing and the services they offered. Interpreters, liaisons -- They hired refugees for these positions. Refugees also volunteered to fulfill service hours that are required by TANF. Cross training -- There was mutual training going on about refugee backgrounds and about Head Start services and how the different systems worked. They talked about how to address logistical barriers like using home-based and extended-day program options in Head Start. And finally, the Head Start/Early Head Start agencies started to contract with a broader range of agencies. So English language training, refugee employment. And the Syracuse agency developed an online shared database.

So talk about coordination and creativity. And I know it was a lot of work, and it took a year to do it. But this meant that when a family received a service, the other agency knew about it. When they had a need, the other agency knew about it. They could do conjoined, or joined site visits or home visits so that they had the cultural interpretation, the language interpretation together with the Head Start services. So these, we thought, were really exciting, and when you're talking about, you know, just

releasing, you know, that power that's there, just a little bit of encouragement and a little bit of support, and these agencies came up with tremendous, terrific models. I'm going to point out -- I included a handout -- I don't know if you all can see this -- that you can download. And this is really the culmination of what we learned from working together with the Refugee Resettlement System and Head Start together.

So, this is ERSEA -- So, eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance in Early Head Start and Head Start reaching emerging refugee and immigrant populations. So this provides all kinds of information about the background of refugees. And I won't go through this blow-by-blow. I will let you all do that. But also how you can work together on the community-assessment process. And it has a worksheet where you can talk about, you know, what services each system provides and how you can work together on that. And then we also -- We ended up developing a tremendous number of tools, too. And so one of the pages also provides you with links to these tools. And this includes cultural backgrounders, talking points to help establish your relationship. And we are about to come out with indigenous resources. So for Mixtec, Zapotec, and Triqui families who are here.

Lorena: Fantastic.

Lyn: It is. So we're very excited about that. So stay tuned. But this has all of the information in it and links to more that I think you need to work on those relationships. So I'm going to turn this back to you.

Lorena: So, when we think of partnerships, we often think of this idea that if you want to go fast, you go alone. But if you want to go far, you go together. There is much depth. There is much stronger and impactful outcomes when we really are looking at building partnerships that are based in relationships. So I want to ask a question to those of you out there. I'd like to hear -- We'd like to hear -- what type of relationships and partnerships have you formed in your community? Who have been those other players that have been a partner for your Head Start for the parents and the children of your community? So it would be interesting to see the variety of partners that our Head Starts have developed.

Moderator: With dentists.

Lorena: Dentists? Interesting.

Moderator: It takes a minute for them to get rolling here. Repeat your question, Dr. Gonzalez, please.

Lorena: So, out there, the Head Start agency centers -- What type of partnerships and relationships have you built to support children and families.

Moderator: With churches, community clinics. They come in and do free screening. W.I.C. programs, L.E.A.s, foster grandparents, doctors, mental-health clinics, parent and community education programs, school districts, libraries, public-health nurses. Early-learning communities.

Lyn: Any partnerships with Refugee Resettlement agencies or with indigenous community-based organizations?

Moderator: Hand in Hand and Parenting Across Cultures. YMCA. Museums. So, Refugee Resettlement organizations.

Lorena: There you go.

Lyn: Great.

Moderator: I guess folks out there who were serving refugee families, can you share with us -- Immigration Coalition.

Lyn: Yeah. Great.

Moderator: City officials. There's some acronyms I am not sure what they stand for.

Lorena: Yeah, so, as I'm hearing these come in, it's interesting. When you look at this model again, it would be interesting for you to ask yourself as a group, "Where am I on the spectrum? Is there room for me to grow? Is there room to bring other partners?" And so it gives us at least an idea of where we are, and what are the elements that I might include and the partners and the strategies to take it to the next level? So it's fantastic to hear the variety of partners. And I can clearly see, when I think of dentists -- Well, that certainly is a great need. And so then, when we think of, "How do we take this to the next level? What might that look like?" And so it might very well look as an opportunity for parents to come visit dental offices, an opportunity to hear what a dental assistant might do, an opportunity to even consider that as something I might want to do with the future. So the partnership is not just offering a service, but also expanding it to think about what else can go with that partner, and deeper. And the other thing is to also think, "What is in it for the partner?" You know, "What's in it for the dentist? What's in it for the church?" So that it's a win-win relationship and that it's not just one-sided because that could get tiring on the partner's side. And to really think, "How do we honor each other?" so that it's a long-standing, and, "How do we look at our place on the spectrum, and is there room to grow?"

Lyn: I think those are wonderful questions, yeah. And I love hearing from the audience, too. And I do want to see that for Refugee Resettlement, there's always been a policy for not overburdening any community. But this means that refugees from all these 70 different countries speaking all these languages really are sent to every community throughout the U.S. So they're in our communities. And with the rapidly increasing immigrant population, too, with one quarter of all of our children being from immigrant families, that's a lot of families out there. So, can we ask how are agencies reaching out to families in these emerging communities? And even, you know, if people want to share the challenges that they've had in reaching them, and solutions.

Moderator: Well, I think they're asking you for the solution.

[Laughter]

One question that did come through related to what you're asking is, "With stricter Head Start qualifications, it's now a barrier for indigenous parents to become aides in the program. Since it's a long-term process to increase academic and language skills, that leaves learning environments without these essential links between home and Head Start. Any ideas?"

Lyn: I think that's a wonderful issue to raise -- an important issue to raise. Well, I think we can talk about policies and how to make those -- You know, we all agree the quality should be raised. It should be high. But how do we, then, engage parents in the programs with the refugee resettlement? For example, we had, you know, coming in as volunteers in the classroom as part of their community

service for TANF. They were hired in other positions as interpreters. They can be trainers, too, about their culture.

Lorena: That's right.

Lyn: And when you work together with an indigenous organization, it opens up -- I think agencies realize how much they bring to the table and how much they have to offer. And once they start to get to know each other, sometimes I think these solutions become more obvious.

Lorena: And the other thing that we've seen in rural communities is that oftentimes parents can't get to the center to volunteer. So, as we're doing today, we're using technology to access. We provide, in this particularly community that I can remember -- They provided an iPad and FaceTime. And you had a parent present in the classroom reading in their native language to students. And so certainly, technology -- It's not necessarily the same relationship engagement, but the need for the language and the cultural experience from the parent is very important. And certainly, that's one way of still maintaining that connection.

Moderator: Wonderful. Great.

Lyn: I'll just still add a little something. With the transportation, again, when people met together and brainstormed, "What are our challenges, and what are possible solutions?" someone had a connection, I think, with the city vans. So they were able to get some transportation. The Refugee Resettlement agency started to resettle refugees into the neighborhoods where Head Start was. So, I think, you know, it comes out of these conversations, really, and that creative problem solving and things that seemed really impossible to address. Our pilot sites came up with really neat solutions. And we can share more of those, too, if people are interested.

Moderator: So, we had a question from Joyce, and she asks, "In the continual partnership framework, is there a workbook that exists to help a program walk itself through the steps of cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and strategic alliance?"

Lorena: That's a great question. And interestingly, we normally do this model training in about a half a day. So the idea that, you know, I'm so quickly offering it was just an overview, if you will. I'd be happy to offer -- If folks have access to my e-mail -- to send some of the materials that we've used because it really is an opportunity to measure oneself as I'm moving on the spectrum of this partnership. So I'd be happy to offer the materials.

Moderator: Okay, thank you. So, a question from Karina. She says, "As a home visitor, how can we encourage and motivate our families to take advantage of our community resources and partnerships?"

Lorena: You know, that's a great question because I sometimes -- And I'm glad to hear I don't hear it as often, but I sometimes still hear, "Well, our parents don't want to. They don't want to." And so part of this construct of cultural humility is to ask ourselves, "What am I not doing that engages the parent?" Because if we're still continuously practicing in our same old paradigm and it's not working, then that's a suggestion for us to start to think of different strategies. And so there's a variety of strategies to start, but the first place I would begin is to really have an honest conversation that is judgment-free, power-free with those parents. If you begin to build the relationship -- And that's why this relationship

-- Think about bonding. Think about bonding. When you're in a bonded relationship, there's trust. And so it's critical to have the language. And I say that because oftentimes even in our own communication, the way we structure our words and sentences oftentimes put others in defense mechanisms that don't allow for me to engage or to respond. And so really, it's about first checking in with self, looking at how I'm coming to this, how is my language, and engaging in an honest conversation as to what is and is not working to invite parents. I have so many stories and observations that I've seen when folks really thought they were doing the best that they could, and it was just a matter of re-framing and the matter in which we were speaking that then allowed that relationship and hearing of why or why not folks are not engaged. So that would be my first recommendation is to check myself and have that honest conversation with parents because that's where you want to know. Asking me, I can give you some answers, but isn't it from the parent that you want to know why this parent is not engaging? Good question.

Moderator: Great. So we have another question that says, "Do you have any suggestions for helping childcare professionals understand the importance of supporting diverse families, even if they currently don't have any diverse families enrolled in their programs?"

Lorena: So, the first question I would ask is, "How are they defining 'diversity'?" Because oftentimes, we think of diversity from an ethnic perspective. So certainly, gender is diverse. Age is diverse. And so ask yourself, "What's the diversity that you're looking for?" But I would venture that you do have diversity. So it's expanding the definition of that diversity. You know, at least with a lot of our Latino population, our Latino families, diversity is present because they come from a young child to the great grandparents who are living there. And so although they may be one ethnic group, they are very diverse in that group because of the age and experience. So, you know, think about expanding that definition of "diversity," and once you've seen that, then enter diversity from that place.

Moderator: Absolutely. And you talked earlier about cultural humility and really thinking about understanding the family stories and their contexts. And also, within ethnic groups, there's lots of diversity there, as well.

Lorena: That's right. Absolutely. Great point there.

Moderator: So, another question we have is, "How do we engage families in the process of collaboration for parent meetings and family engagements?"

Lyn: How do we engage?

Moderator: Engage the parents in collaboration. Engage the families in the collaboration.

Lyn: Okay, that's -- Yeah, again, these are great questions. I think it depends on the family, of course. And if we're thinking about refugee and indigenous families who most agencies -- what we could call mainstream agencies have a harder time engaging and reaching out to, I think it's usually working with the ethnic-community-based organizations that serve them and have that trusting relationship with them, with the faith-based organizations. We worked with the Sierra Leonean community for a while, and it started out by going to the Bread of Life Church. And so we got to know the community, and they got to know us a little bit. And then, you know, we could see what kind of services they were interested in, what was meaningful to them. And so, you know, it's kind of like the acculturation -- Not just one person changes, but both change. So our community and our agency and services also change.

Lorena: I would also add that it's important for us to recognize and meet families where they're at. And so if you look at the spectrum, and you want to bring a parent into the strategic-alliance place, you have to ask yourself, "Are they ready to be there?" We have an ideal vision of what we would want from our parents. But again, that's our vision. So meet parents where they're at. If they are at a place where they can bake cakes and bring to the Cake Walk activity, that's okay. That's a way you start that relationship. The next -- They might want to teach how to bake that cake. And the next is the next level, and so on. But it's critical to recognize that we've got to respond to the parent and meet them where they're at. 'Cause we immediately want to -- "Oh, this parent can do" -- And then you've got parents who are ready. I have been in many -- They're primed. They're primed to take on leadership roles, and we're ready to place them where they're at because we're meeting them where they're at.

Lyn: And I think that takes it back to the relationship building because you have to get to know each other first. And the cultural humility -- You need to step back. Moderator: So, I have a question for you that says -- And this is back to the organizational piece -- "What is a good process for assessing and then understanding the philosophies of the other organizations to decide whether there is a good partnership or opportunity for alliance there and that'll be beneficial for both?"

Lorena: That's a great question.

Lyn: Yeah.

Lorena: And I would certainly follow the same process I'm doing with parents. You've got to build that relationship. That's what's the critical element in this is when you know -- For example, someone shared that they work with a dentist. Who is this dentist? Where do they come from? What's their vision? What's their history? What's their outcome? Getting to understand what their purpose -- Again, you're going to have a dentist who may just want to give away free screenings. Then you may have a dentist who's farther in this level who really wants to take in parents as interns or do tours. So, it's beginning the relationship with a very simple meeting of coffee and getting to know each other and building upon that. You know, I'm always cautious when we're entering in with partners because I want to make sure that their heart and their commitment is equal to our Head Start heart. And if that's not necessarily aligned, they may not be the top partner, but they can be the folks who come and give away toothbrushes, and that's fine.

Lyn: That's great. And I'll just add, you know, "Know thyself." So really start with knowing yourself and your agency. And what do you need? I think a lot of people are often drawn toward agencies that are similar to theirs. Maybe you need one that's a little more complimentary or that fills in for your gaps and your weaknesses. So being clear about that. And like you were saying, "Where is that agency? And how committed are they to partnerships? Are they going to be open to a more equal partnership?" I think we've all been in situations where sometimes one is dominant, and the other ends up feeling like they're taken advantage of. So, those are all things to pay attention to in choosing a partner in an agency. And, yeah, that getting-to-know-each other process, and being honest, too -- being honest in what you can do and not over-committing because that's so easy to do as you sit around that table, and you all come up with wonderful ideas of what's needed before you have the agency support, really, to carry it through.

Moderator: So, we are coming to the end of our time, but I will offer an opportunity for each of you, and we'll start with you, Lyn, to just let us know one takeaway that you'd like people to have from today's session -- one quick takeaway. And then I'll ask you, Dr. Gonzalez.

Lyn: Okay. I think one of my takeaways is to be sure you know about refugees and immigrants in your community because I think a lot of us -- We don't run into refugees and immigrants. And especially if they're undocumented, for example. And they're marginalized almost by definition. So, I hope that this raises awareness of really the numbers and the spread of our changing communities and that people do outreach and really look for these often hidden communities because they're not likely to seek the agencies out.

Moderator: Thank you. Dr. Gonzalez.

Lorena: I would challenge us all to really check ourselves and make sure that I'm coming to a parent community free of judgment, free of fixing. And although that sounds easy, I, myself, after 25 years of this work, find myself, because I'm so taxed for time, and I've got to do things, that I don't pause to recognize my own biases. And I can't engage parents if I'm speaking down to them, if I'm trying to fix them, if I have solutions for them. That's not going to be a place where parents are going to want to engage with you. And so I would always encourage us to check ourselves.

Moderator: Great. Thank you both.

Lorena: You're welcome. Thank you.

Lyn: Thank you.

[Applause]

[End video]